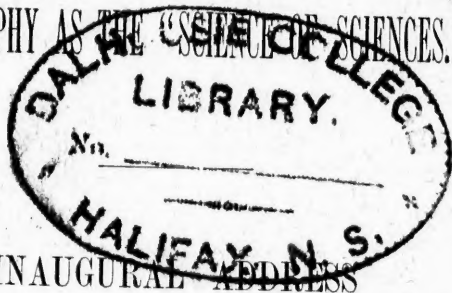


PHILOSOPHY AS THE "SCIENCE OF SCIENCES."



INAUGURAL ADDRESS

*Delivered at the Convocation of Dalhousie University,
Halifax, N. S., Oct. 18, 1887.*

BY

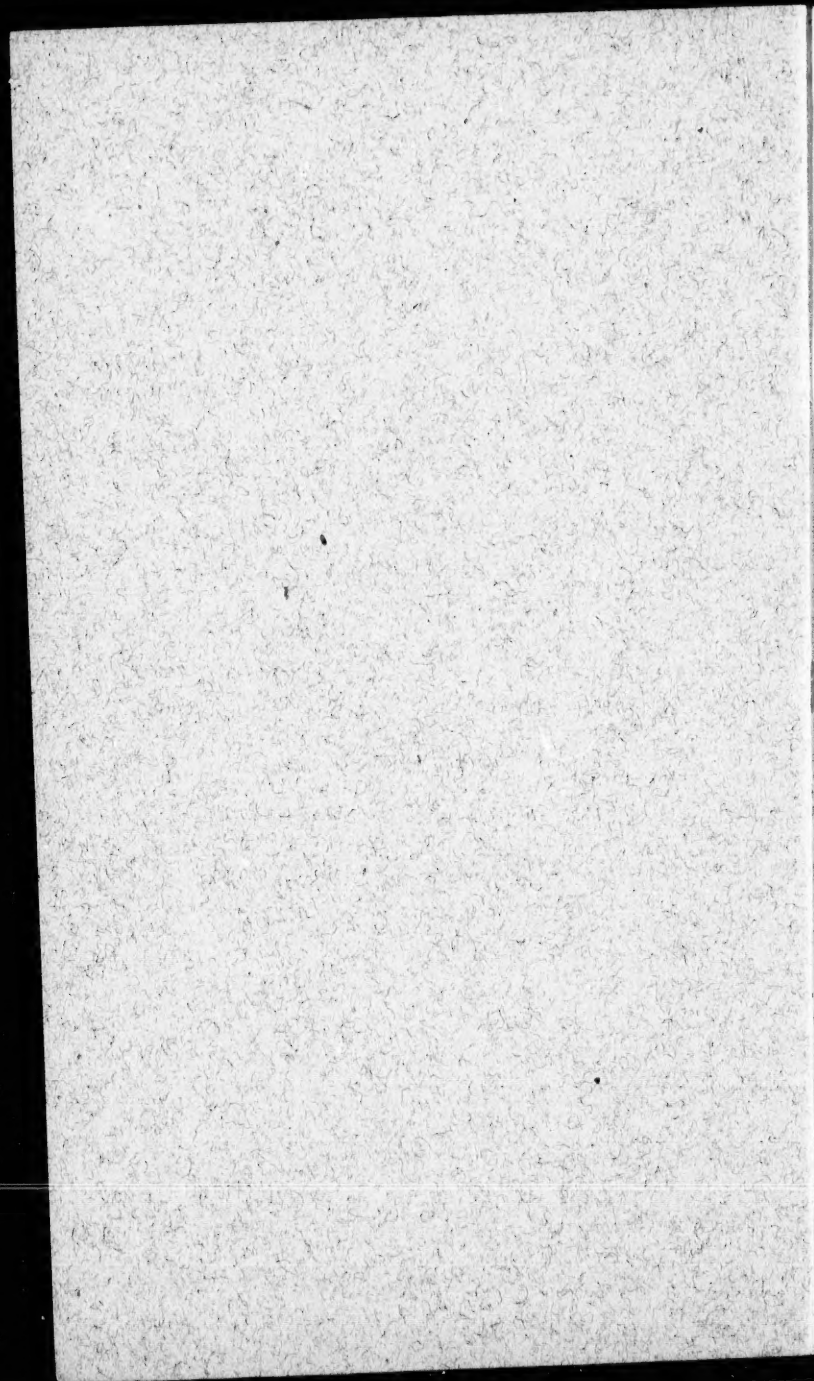
JAMES SETH, M. A.,

Professor of Metaphysics and Ethics.

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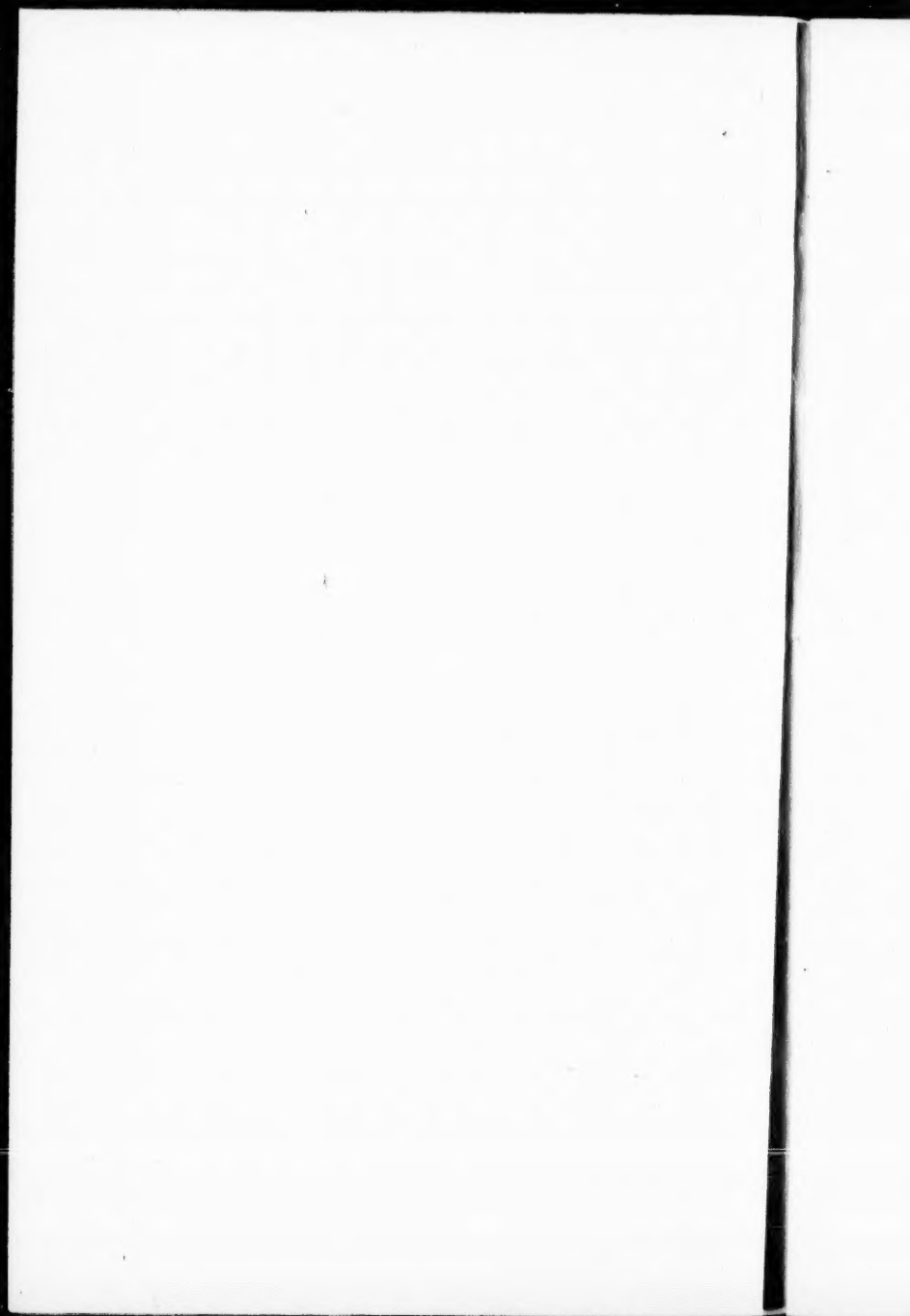
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Philosophy as the "Science of Sciences."

I believe it is customary for the professor to whom it falls to deliver the Introductory Address, to take advantage of this opportunity to explain, in general and somewhat popular terms, the nature and claims of his own special subject, as well as its relation to other departments of academic study. And while I should naturally, on the ground of precedent alone, be led to adopt a similar course, I do so the more willingly because of the peculiar position and fortune of Mental Philosophy. Here, if anywhere, there is need of explanation, and possibly even of defence. It is, indeed, significant of the irresistible claims of Philosophy that its right to a place in the academic curriculum is seldom, if ever, openly questioned. While the scientific and practical mind of this century has no hesitation in questioning the value of a classical education, it seldom ventures upon an open and avowed attack on the equally old-world and unpractical study of Philosophy. Still there is a widespread scepticism, none the less real because it is ashamed to express itself, as to the intrinsic value and present interest of philosophical study. It is allowed to retain its place by sufferance, as it were, as an interesting survival of the ancient and mediæval world, and a useful intellectual gymnastic. None, perhaps, who pretend to culture, and none without such a pretension dare intermeddle with questions of

the higher education, would accept this frank and definite expression of their attitude to Philosophy. But it is the secret thought of many. Now, I believe that such an attitude is the result, solely and entirely, of misunderstanding as to the fundamental aim and spirit of Philosophy. It is only when the nature and purpose of philosophical study are not understood, or *misunderstood*, that the study itself is reprobated and requires defence. Once understood, it needs none. What I am anxious to do, then, in this address, is to explain, so far as the narrow limits permit, what Philosophy is, in the confidence that this explanation, in so far as it is successful, will be, at the same time, its best and sufficient defence.

Philosophy, then, is a kind, or rather a stage, of Knowledge. I say *stage* rather than *kind*, because all knowledge is essentially or in kind the same. In the lower you have always the germ of the higher; in the higher only the development of the lower. We may distinguish three great stages of Knowledge—(1) the ordinary or popular, (2) the scientific, and (3) the philosophical. Each of these, however, is only a stage in the development of the same knowledge. Ordinary knowledge naturally and inevitably *becomes* scientific; scientific knowledge, as naturally and inevitably, *becomes* philosophic. The higher is not *different* from the lower; it is only the lower followed out and made conscious of its own meaning. The lower finds in the higher its explanation; sees its own content reasoned out and developed. And Philosophy is just the final and perfect form which Knowledge, in its development from lower to higher, inevitably assumes.

Ordinary knowledge is knowledge of fact. The universe is, to the ordinary man, a mass of facts, and his attitude to it that of passive observation. He is content to observe the facts as they present themselves to him—*en masse*. It is true he cannot help introducing into the facts a certain unity and relation; otherwise he could not *know* them all. He is compelled, therefore, to employ certain principles of unity, of relation. But he employs them unconsciously and unquestioningly, as mere assumptions. The great principle of the uniformity of nature, for instance, is implied in our most elementary knowledge of the physical world; but while constantly employed, it is never consciously realized, far less questioned or criticised. In short, the ordinary man does not think of explaining or justifying his knowledge, either to others or to himself. Knowledge is to him a practical thing; it serves all the purposes of life, and life is his concern. He lives by faith; his very knowledge is a kind of faith—faith not so much in fact as in a great body of principles which underlie and make possible his knowledge of fact. For the explanation, at once of his knowledge and of the facts he knows, he looks to Science.

This task Science confidently undertakes. Not content with mere passive observation of the facts as they lie massed before it, Science seeks to reduce the facts to unity; to recognize in each fact a "case" of some law or general principle, and in each law a "case" of some law yet higher or more general. Thus the unconscious unity which inspires the knowledge of the ordinary man is in Science consciously realized. Science

is just this recognition, in the endless variety of phenomena, of an underlying unity; and it is in this sense, as exacting from it an explicit recognition of the unity implied in it from the first, that Science explains our ordinary knowledge.

The explanation of Science, however, is always partial and incomplete, and it remains for Philosophy to give the complete and final explanation. For scientific, equally with ordinary knowledge, itself requires to be explained, and in two senses Philosophy may be said to contain the explanation of Science.

(1.) Philosophy completes, or seeks to complete, the partial explanation of Science. Each science deals with one part or aspect only of the universe of being. The mass of detail to be reduced to unity is so vast that it is impossible for any single science to overtake the whole. There is no such thing as a universal science. The man of science is necessarily a specialist; if he would contribute his part to the grand result, he must limit himself to some one department of existence. Science thus incurs the unavoidable consequences of Specialism. It necessarily regards the universe from its own point of view, which is not that of the whole but of the part, not central but one-sided. Each science deals with its own part or aspect of the universe, and considers this apart from the whole, as a *res completa*—a separate and independent share. The incompleteness of scientific explanation is thus the result of the incompleteness or "abstractness" of the scientific point of view—a point of view which, while legitimate and necessary in view of the peculiar work of the individual sci-

ence, becomes inevitably no longer adequate when the survey is widened and the attempt made to comprehend from it the whole of things. Its very excellence for Science constitutes its defect as a complete explanation. Emphasizing, and therefore exaggerating, the significance of the part at the expense of the whole, it misses the full meaning of both. For the part can be fully understood only in the light of the whole; the whole only as the concrete unity of the parts. Take, by way of illustration, the science of Physiology or of Political Economy. The standpoint of the former is physical life; that of the latter, material wealth. It is obvious that neither of these standpoints is adequate to a complete explanation of the universe, limited as each is to one part or phase of existence, to the exclusion of all the rest. Physiology, for instance, cannot explain conscious or spiritual life, except in so far as the conscious or spiritual is at the same time physical. Nor can political economy take into account moral and artistic considerations except in so far as these have also an economic side.

What is wanted, therefore, beyond the partial explanations of the special sciences, is an explanation of the *whole*, such as Science is unable to give. The various scientific standpoints must be co-related, and the results of the special sciences regarded from the higher standpoint of the whole, in the light of which the parts find their true meaning. This ultimate, because complete, explanation Philosophy undertakes to give. Her interest is not in the parts, but in the whole and in its unity. God, the world and man—the three great factors of universal existence—Philosophy seeks to view them in their unity and

in their mutual relation. She seeks to view the whole, and from its centre; to view the parts, not in isolation and independence, but *sub specie æternitatis*—as each informed with the idea of the whole.

(2.) Philosophy undertakes the final, as opposed to the provisional, explanation of Science. In this view her task may be said to be the final revision or criticism of knowledge. We have seen that Science compels ordinary knowledge to a consciousness of its own assumptions or uncriticised principles. Science, however, leaves this work of awakening or criticism incomplete. Science has its own assumptions. The scientific, equally with the ordinary man, employs principles unconsciously and unquestioningly; and it remains for Philosophy to complete the work of criticism begun by Science. Take, for example, the law of causal connection. The man of science does not ask whether, or how far, this is a valid principle of knowledge. He employs it in all his reasoning; but his only concern is to find the laws according to which it is exemplified in particular phenomena. He is so interested in "cases" of the law that it does not occur to him to inquire into the nature and ground of the law itself. This is only an instance of the general truth that the principles which underlie the procedure of scientific as well as of ordinary thought are, for the latter as for the former, of the nature of assumptions. Philosophy, on the contrary, can have no assumptions. No part or phase of knowledge can claim immunity from her criticism. It is her high calling to investigate, and, as the result of investigation, to justify or condemn the assumptions alike of ordinary and of scientific knowledge.

To sum up what has just been said about the three stages of Knowledge and their relation to one another, we may take as an illustration our knowledge of space. Some conception of space is implied in our ordinary knowledge of the material world. We always *place* things at a distance from ourselves and from one another, that is, we relate them in a common space. But it is not necessary, for the purposes of ordinary knowledge, to inquire into the nature of this space or its properties; nor does the ordinary man do so. Such inquiries he leaves to Science and Philosophy. The former, not satisfied with the vagueness of ordinary knowledge, seeks to give the conception a new definiteness. The science of Geometry investigates the properties of space, and formulates the universal and necessary spatial relations. But even Geometry does not raise the question of the essential nature of space. *Given* space—the space of ordinary knowledge—Geometry deduces its necessary properties; but what space itself is, it does not inquire. Nor does Geometry consider the relation of the spatial to the other aspects of the universe; it concentrates on this one aspect with exclusive interest. It thus remains for Philosophy to complete, if possible, our knowledge of space, by investigating its essential nature, our right to employ the conception alike in our ordinary and scientific knowledge, as well as its relation to other necessary conceptions or aspects of the universe.

Thus it is that Philosophy is the last and highest stage of Knowledge—the ultimate form which, in its development from lower to higher, it inevitably assumes. It is the endeavour—con-

sciously and completely—to *think* or *re-think* the universe, only partially and hesitatingly thought by the ordinary and the scientific man; the final and complete awakening from the sleep of unconscious or semi-conscious thought; Knowledge comes to full self-consciousness.

Let me illustrate this unique position of Philosophy as the "science of sciences," by considering a little farther its relation, on the one hand, to Science, and on the other to Theology, called by Aristotle "the first philosophy."

The one constant factor of existence—the "common denominator" to whose terms all phenomena may be reduced, is Thought. From this "magic circle" escape is impossible. Things are for us non-existent, because non-significant, until known; and to *know* things is to *think* them. The Science of Thought is, therefore, the science of universal existence, investigating as it does the essential nature of that whose special manifestations are studied by the various sciences. As has been well said, "at bottom there is but one subject of study—the forms and metamorphoses of mind. All other subjects may be reduced to that; all other studies bring us back to this study." Occupying this central or universal point of view, Philosophy is free from the limitations which necessarily beset the special sciences, and is therefore in a position to adjudicate between their conflicting claims.

Science, however, does not always recognize her own limitations, but sometimes, and more particularly in our own time, sets up a claim to that independence and ultimateness of view which, we have just seen, belongs by peculiar right to Philosophy. In setting up this

claim, Science abandons her own legitimate and proper ground, and becomes Philosophy. It is strange that men, otherwise eminently fitted to represent the science of this century, should have laid themselves open to the condemnation which Bacon pronounced against the science of the Middle Ages, of "false generalization," that is, generalization which is not a strict and faithful induction from the facts observed. The whole phenomenon of Agnosticism, it seems to me, is an example of this pseudo-science. It becomes necessary, therefore, in order to clearness of thought, to distinguish carefully between the provinces of Science and Philosophy. Until we thus distinguish, in the writings of Spencer, between what is the result of strictly scientific procedure, and what is very questionable philosophical superstructure reared thereon, we are not in a position to judge of the value of the net-result. Thus one very evident service of Philosophy is, by showing the necessary limitations of its point of view, to correct the over-confident conclusions of Science.

But Philosophy has not only this negative relation to Science; it has also positive relations of a close and important nature. If what I have said above be true, it follows that Philosophy and Science are organically connected with one another. It is indeed the result, in large measure, of the growth of the scientific spirit in modern times that Philosophy has learned to modify her conception of her task and province, and to recognize her community of interest with Science. The old conception of "Metaphysics," as dealing with a sphere of existence *beyond* or *behind* the natural has been generally abandoned.

Philosophy, it is now recognized, has to do, not with a world of abstract Being or Things-in-themselves apart from the world of phenomena, but with that world of experience which is the common domain of Philosophy and Science. Its true function is not to separate that which has been joined together, to conjure up a world of absolute Reality apart from the world of experience; but rather, as we have seen, to join once more what Science has separated, the various parts or aspects of the universe in one great whole. So misleading, indeed, in this reference, because so full of archaic misunderstanding, is the term "Metaphysics," that I believe it is largely to blame for the distrust of Philosophy so prevalent in the popular and scientific mind. As suggesting the old historic conception of her task, the term is full of interest; but in view of the revolution—for it it is no less—since Kant in the attitude of Philosophy to Science, it is questionable whether it should be retained. Kant has shown, once for all, that Philosophy, in the sense of the old "Metaphysics," that is, as the science of absolute Being or Things-in-themselves, is an impossible dream, and that the only legitimate and fruitful Philosophy is the Philosophy of Experience. Not that either Philosophy or Science is empirical. While both alike are limited to experience, both, in a sense, go beyond experience, and seek its explanation. But though Philosophy goes farther than Science, and seeks to supplement its partial and provisional explanation by one that is exhaustive and final, it is always the same Experience that it is seeking to explain.

But Philosophy not only completes the work of Science; it also leads up to that of Theology,

and throws light on legitimate procedure here also. This is the task of the Philosophy of Religion. For here we are still dealing with experience—experience in its highest form—that of the religious consciousness. This, like all experience, implies certain factors which make it possible; and it is in the justice done to these by the full and adequate view of Philosophy that we see its most positive service. In its appreciation of the moral—the basis the religious experience; of the great fact of selfhood in human life; of the eternal import of moral distinctions; of the destiny of the moral agent; of the counterpart in God of man's moral nature; of the subordination of the physical to the ethical, and at the same time the working down of the ethical into the physical; in the final interpretation of the universe in the light of this, its highest characteristic—in all this Philosophy is preparing the way for Theology, finding, in the facts of the universe and especially of human life, the groundwork of religious experience. Above all, in the strange, inexplicable, yet constant fact of evil, of conflict, of failure in moral life, Philosophy finds the great religious need. The full significance of these facts is appreciated only when they are interpreted religiously. The only possible solution of the problem they present is a religious solution. The religious man conceives moral evil as Sin against God, and finds escape from the contradictions of moral life in the thought of a Divine Redemption. It is the task of Theology, and not of Philosophy, to think out this religious experience, to theorize it, if possible. In so far, too, as the element of Revelation enters

into Theology, its sphere is distinct from that of Philosophy no less than of Science. Still, dealing as it necessarily does with ultimate philosophical notions, as these are implied in religious experience, Theology must receive the teaching of Philosophy as to how far these notions come within the compass of our knowledge, as to how far it is possible to theorize this highest form of experience. This connection of Philosophy and Theology is indeed matter of history. Even in the Scholastic age Philosophy was acknowledged to be "the handmaid of Theology;" and in modern times a rationalistic or negative Theology has been the invariable complement of a rationalistic or negative Philosophy. While already we can see the beginnings of the influence of the new philosophical standpoint of this century upon the Theology of the time. Here, once more, Philosophy is seen to be the "science of sciences."

The task of Philosophy is thus a very ambitious one. Too ambitious, we are apt to say, when we contrast the grandeur of its ideal with the poverty of its actual achievement. If its ideal far surpasses that of Science, does not its attainment fall infinitely short? Instead of the sure march of ever wider conquest of truth, we have a prolonged war of systems, system after system, mutually destructive; the same old questions debated again and again, with no advance, no definite gain of truth. Such is the disheartening conclusion which we are apt to draw from a survey of the History of Philosophy.

But is there no progress to be traced in the history? Does not the law of evolution find verification here as elsewhere, though with less of constancy, more of freedom; less of uniform

necessity, more of the free play of individuality? Is there no development to be traced—from lower to higher, from less to more adequate views of truth? System follows system, it is true; but not arbitrarily and aimlessly, rather by a certain inward necessity, the necessity of thought. Nor is there any *going back* in Philosophy. Each apparent "return" is in reality an advance, made possible by the intervening conflict and criticism. Compare, for example, any great modern with a corresponding ancient system, as the philosophy of Hegel with that of Aristotle. Aristotle's formulæ may be capable of expressing Hegelian conceptions; but the formulæ, when thus interpreted, are infinitely richer to us than they could have been to Aristotle. So again the "return to Kant," of which we hear so much at present, is not a return to the philosophy of Kant precisely as conceived by Kant himself, to the sacrifice of all that has been done since; it is a return to Kantian conceptions illumined and developed by later thought. Such is truth, that each seed contains the whole in germ, each facet reflects, or may in the proper light reflect the colours of the whole. But the light which reveals these colours comes only after long and patient seeking, although, once found, it sheds back its lustre upon the discoveries of the past. It is thus that every part of the history of Philosophy is full of interest to the speculative mind; for each part is touched with the glory of the whole. Each thinker in turn has had his own glance of deepest insight into truth, though it may be that we, in the retrospect, can see clearly and fully what he, prophet-like, saw but dimly and afar off.

And as for the strife and tumult which mark the history of thought, as well as of action, is it not so, that through negation and contradiction, and only thus, the full content of the truth may be developed. The truth of Realism, for example, must be opposed to the truth of Idealism, that the full truth, of which each is only a partial expression, may be reached. Truth is so rich and many-sided, that it cannot be exhausted in any single view, however apparently comprehensive. Its various sides must in turn be emphasized, that at least the whole may, in all the fulness of its meaning, be seen and appreciated. It may, indeed, be that this full vision of the truth belongs to God alone, and that man can only behold and celebrate its various aspects as, one by one, they are presented to him. It may be that, as Socrates said, we can only be "philosophers"—seekers after wisdom—and that God alone is *wise*. A final and complete Philosophy may be unattainable. That full-toned harmony, which is the last result of all the discords that together make the grand anthem of the truth, we perhaps can never hear; it may be for the ears of Him alone whose praise it tells. But that the discords do contribute to such a final harmony we know and feel, and it is this hope and confidence that has inspired the singers through all the centuries as each took up his several part.

Thus, even though complete success in the execution of its task may be impossible, yet the ideal, unattainable though it be, is the spur and spring of philosophical endeavour. Our intellectual, like our moral life, implies an ideal. But it may be that, here as there, the ideal is

unattainable, and our experience is one of constant struggle and failure, borne up by the hope of ultimate success. But though the characteristic of both alike is failure and defeat, that does not express the whole of either. There *is* tragedy in both ; but neither is *altogether* tragic. We do not know absolute good—our good is always mixed with evil ; nor absolute truth—our truth is always mixed with error. But good is ever stronger than evil, and truth than error ; and in failure, whether moral or intellect, which *knows itself* to be failure, there is the seed of ultimate success ; in defeat, which *knows itself* to be defeat, there is the prophecy of future triumph. And perhaps it needs the lesson of failure and defeat in the struggle towards its attainment to teach us the rich significance of the ideal, alike of our moral and of our intellectual life. Perhaps if it were not for the discords of our life, and the knowledge that they *are* discords, we could not appreciate the harmony when we hear it. At any rate faith in an Ideal which, while it reveals, can also harmonize the discords, is the postulate of the highest life, whether of action or of thought.

“ The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;

Enough that He heard it once : we shall hear it by-and-bye.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence

For the fulness of the days ? Have we withered or agonized ?

Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence ?

Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be prized ? ”

I fear I have already detained you too long, but I should like, before I close, to commend the study of Philosophy to you on the ground of the intense and varied interest which attaches to it.

And first there is the human interest—the interest of life. Man, in virtue of his peculiar nature, is necessarily a philosopher. As a rational being, he is not content till he has recognized in all things a reason answering to his own. Born into a world of mystery, he cannot rest without pushing the mystery farther and farther back. He craves for knowledge—ever higher and fuller—of the world, of God, of his own nature and duty and destiny. And in knowledge there is no such thing as satisfaction; it is a constant hunger and thirst, an insatiable craving. The very consciousness of mystery—of problems yet unsolved—is the consciousness of the need of solution. Man must *think*. It is the very law of his being. And to philosophize is only to think more deeply and more unweariedly.

In all literature—in the novel and the drama especially—we find this reaching after a complete view of human life, of the working of moral forces. Philosophy is just the attempt to reach a complete and reasoned view, where literature is content with “flashes” of insight, as much of emotion as of thought. It is true that life is always more than philosophy, and it may be that literature, in spite of the fragmentariness of its view, or perhaps just because of this fragmentariness, is truer to life than philosophy. For “in literature,” as my colleague, Dr. Alexander, finely remarked in addressing you on a similar occasion, “is to be found a treasure-house of aid—suggestions the more stimulating

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that they are but suggestions, partial solutions the more enduring that they are but partial, and sometimes a complete philosophy implicit where least expected." Literature, like Physiology, views the living reality; while Philosophy, like Anatomy, studies the dead skeleton. The interest of Philosophy is, like that of Science, of a different kind from the interest of literature. It is concerned with the *conditions* of that life which, in its full breathing actuality, is the subject of literature. But their interests, though different, are both equally legitimate. The philosophical endeavour to theorize life, to understand its conditions, is no less necessary than the literary or artistic endeavour to appreciate the life itself, which is the result of these conditions.

Manifold indeed are the possible solutions of the problem of Philosophy; and each of us has his own. The solution may be a practical one—the solution of life. This is, in a sense, the universal solution. Many have no interest in literature, far less in philosophy; but all must *live*, and life implies an ideal, however low or ill-considered. Or the solution may be found in religion—in an escape from the contradictions of the present in a higher life in which the difficulties of knowledge are swallowed up in a victorious faith. Or in poetry—imagination and feeling shedding their glory on the dead plain of a merely intellectual life. Yet, in certain moods—of calm and earnest thought—which come to all of us at times, when the eager questionings of reason demand an answer, and escape becomes impossible, the human mind is content with nothing less than a *Philosophy* of life—a clear and reasoned account of its nature and conditions.

And all the intense interest of that life whose nature and conditions it investigates is reflected on the study of Philosophy.

Closely connected with this human interest is the historical interest of philosophical study. Philosophy is no new thing. It is a movement of the human mind from the earliest times to the present day. Men have always pondered its questions. Wonderfully different as have been the solutions of different ages and countries, of different individual minds, the problems are eternally the same. And thus the student of Philosophy is supported by a sense of sympathy in a common search with the thoughtful of every age and country.

Again there is the literary interest. Nor is this merely incidental, in that Philosophy, as we have seen, deals fully and deliberately with the problem raised in all literature; there is, farther, a whole literary domain peculiar to Philosophy. The great thinkers of the world have also been amongst its greatest writers. The literature of Philosophy is no less important—in some periods it is much more so—than the literature of the Imagination. Would not Greek literature be poorer without the Dialogues of Plato and the Treatises of Aristotle? And in modern times are not names like Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Hegel, great in literature as well as in philosophy? Some training in Philosophy, then, is necessary—is it not?—for the appreciation of a whole department of literature, devoted as it is to philosophical investigations. We must distinguish, of course, between the value of philosophical works as literature and their value as philosophy; but

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we cannot appreciate the one, without in some measure, at least, appreciating the other also. For, as one of its most eminent living exponents (Prof. Dowden) has said; "The study of literature is not a study solely of what is graceful, attractive and pleasure-giving in books; it attempts to understand the great thoughts of the great thinkers. To know Greek literature, we must know Aristotle; to know French literature, we must know Descartes. In English literature of the eighteenth century, Berkeley and Butler and Hume are greater names than Gray an' Collier." One result of your study of Philosophy, then, will be to introduce you to a large and important department of literature, and to put you in possession of some standard of appreciation, of certain canons of criticism for application there.

Once more: there is what I may call the interest of culture. Being free from the necessary limitations of the scientific standpoint, Philosophy gives a breadth of view which the study of the special sciences cannot give. It gives the right, because the ability, to judge, to criticise; the tolerance which comes of knowledge; the reverence which comes of knowledge of our ignorance. It is the lack of this philosophical culture in the scientific and theological, as well as in the popular mind, that is the constant cause of controversy between Science and Theology. Such controversy invariably arises from the interference of the one with the work of the other, or of either with that of Philosophy. So long as each restricts itself to its own proper sphere, its results are not to be questioned, and will not be found to contradict one another. So soon, however, as either touches on the ultimate questions of Philosophy, 1.

becomes subject to philosophical criticism ; and unless the man of science and the theologian is also a philosopher, he is found lacking in that perfect " culture " which is the condition of sound judgment on these questions.

There is one other interest, suggested in what I have already said, I mean the religious interest. We have seen that Philosophy, regarding the universe as it does from the ethical, and not merely, like Science, from the physical and intellectual side, calls attention to a moral situation, of which the only adequate interpretation and solution is found in Religion. It may indeed, be that a complete Philosophy of Religion is impossible. Religion is always more and stronger than Philosophy, as life is more and stronger than theory ; and the faith of the " little child " may well be wiser than the deepest knowledge of Philosophy. Yet the attempt to think out this highest of all forms of experience is no less necessary than the attempt to think out its lower forms. So surely as we attain to intellectual manhood, we seek a reason of the faith that is in us ; and the stronger our faith, the greater will be our confidence in seeking for its rational basis. This is the supreme undertaking of Philosophy, which investigates the ultimate notions presupposed in all Religion—God, Freedom and Immortality ; and, whether wholly successful or not, at least draws attention to that side of things which points to God and the religious life of fellowship with Him, as the only true and worthy destiny of man.

Such, so far as I have been able hastily and imperfectly to describe it, is the task of Philosophy so great its interest and importance. Some of

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you are entering upon this study to-day, and I would urge you, in my closing word, to earnestness and faithfulness in it. Here, even more than elsewhere, the student must co-operate with the teacher. It is but little that the latter can do alone. I cannot solve your problems for you; the solutions must be your own, or they are of no value. In Philosophy, at least, there is no work done by proxy. The reward is strictly proportioned to individual effort. But I have sufficient confidence in my subject, and in your earnestness of purpose as students of Dalhousie, to believe that you will not be slow to lend me your active co-operation in this great study. The time is propitious. I believe that the interest in the problems of Philosophy is more widespread just at present than at any former time. Men's minds are full of them, and the tremendous interests involved are appreciated as, perhaps, they never were before. You are to prepare to take your part in the great debate; to make conquest of the truth for yourselves, that you may be able help others to it. Use well the time of preparation. You are just entering upon full and independent intellectual life, upon "the novitiate of your intelligence." Possess yourselves of your spiritual birthright; appropriate your great inheritance. But do so with reverence and humility, with a sense of the solemnity of the trust committed to you. In all that you do, be mindful of that high trust, and faithful to it. The use you make of these student years will tell upon your whole future, and far beyond your own. Be faithful, be earnest, be courageous. And when the years of college life have come and gone, they will leave behind them a rich and abiding possession of spiritual gain.





